

TAPE I/I

INTERVIEW WITH SOREL COHEN  
NOVEMBER #2 3, 1982.

S.C. They're enlarged contacts of the Muybridge Bacon series. I was interested to learn that Bacon used Muybridge's photographs of wrestlers as image sources for his paintings of coupled male figures. I'm thinking specifically of two from 1953...Because the painting of 1953 looked so much like the way I had been photographing with the feathery edges and the open planes, I thought, ha, I'd like to make a photograph like that. ...What I wanted to do was to take the motif of the wrestling men and return it to the photographic medium after their so called Baconian experience....

(Existing experiences or creating experiences?)

SC. Very much both. The work is doubly autobiographical. Not only the Bacon Muybridge piece, but certainly the earlier domestic pieces, refer to my life as a woman and as an artist. They're very lyrical and painterly, particularly the Shape of a Gesture where I make an ironic comment on Abstract Expressionist painting...And in the BM piece it may be a little subtler. I was doing it when I was writing my thesis on women artists in the 70's and I was particularly interested in the role reversal the artist is a woman and the model a man. One

of the image sources is Sylvia Sleighs painting  
....In this work I'm more interested in Francis  
Bacon than I am in M.. There's empathy for the  
homo erotic man because of the way homosexual  
men are perceived in straight society, the way  
women are as the so-called other. So there's that  
self projection onto the men. It's also a  
woman's view of male sexuality in that this is  
the only time that men come into physical contact  
with each other when they are in combat. Whereas  
women are much more physical with each other.  
Women are allowed to be physical with each other  
whereas with men it's rather taboo.

K.T. But you constructed the situation. It  
didn't exist out there for you.

S.C. All of my work is constructed. It's all  
fictionalized pieces.

K.T. Is the source material from your experience

S.C. Yes indeed.

S.C. Why do you choose photography as your medium  
rather than another. You could have done like  
Bacon and painted for example.

S.C. If I could paint like Bacon I would. I  
found that I couldn't do what I wanted to do in  
painting...Photography seemed to be the best medium  
to correspond to my commitment to make art about

my life as a woman. The most immediate.

(What characteristics? Representational?)

S.C. It had to be representational and at the same time the kind of image that can only exist in a photograph and not in real life...

I think my photographs do that by virtue of the slow shutter speed, where I disappear when I run things like that... It also relates back, as all my works do, to painting. They all refer to painting. Particularly the new work that I'm doing now, which is an allegory on performance using painting as an allegorical means to carry that text through.

(Performances?)

S.C. Oh yes, they're performances for the still camera. It's the set up shot, the staged event for the still camera. I don't know how well they would work as performances, but they are what I call photo-performances. .... new work

K.T. Process?

S.C. My sources come from art and from myself; they are self referential, one piece grows out of another piece. At the same time there is always very deliberate art world references. It's a synthesis of both...

(About new work) ..220-230

K.T. Illusion of reality or representation of reality?

S.C. I would have to say an illusion of reality. But if I enlarge to life size its very much a representation...

K.T. Camera image itself produces illusion. Can't see things that you can see with the camera.

S.C. Sure it's the fusion of flesh in the Bacon Muybridge series. The content comes out because of the slow shutter speed; the flesh of the two men becomes fused in most of the photographs and content is created as a function of photography

Exotic, eccentric?

S.C. No.....It's probably not in my best interest to say so, but I do think that in some cases truth can be stranger than fiction. Some of the images I see of Winogrand or Papageorge are extremely exotic and could never be staged.

K.T. So are you saying that sometimes when you make up something, it can be closer to the real situation, the emotion of feeling and less absurd than something that is not staged?

S.C. Yes...I don't really hve a feel for the exotic  
...new work...340-353 illusion..

K.T. Can get blur in painting. What is it  
about the camera image that you need?

S.C. (making ironicv statement about painting)

K.T. B.M. series as more intellectual versus  
other series which have a very direct reference to  
self?

S.C. Although I don't a ppear in the BM series, I  
like to think that My persence is implied as  
photographer. I'm on the outside of the frame as th  
the artist observer and I think I pick up on that  
in the newer work where I represent myself as the  
artist observer and also subject.....

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